

CLAIMS

We claim:

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1. A method for establishing a customer account in an electronic remote ordering system wherein order fulfillment is accomplished upon the customer's attendance at a merchant location, comprising:

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creating a provisional customer account contemporaneous with said customer placing an initial order through said remote ordering system for fulfillment at a specific merchant location;

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delivering said initial order from said remote ordering system to said specific merchant location; and,

activating said customer account upon or after said customer's attendance at said specific merchant location for fulfillment of said initial order.

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2. The method of claim 1 wherein:

said step of creating a provisional customer account comprises creating or receiving a customer account identifier; and,

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said customer account is activated upon said customer's attendance at said specific merchant location for fulfillment of said initial order, and without collecting further information from said customer upon said attendance.

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3. The method of claim 2 wherein said customer effects payment for said initial order without delivering further information identifying said customer.

4. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:

establishing a stored value account for said customer and enabling
payment of said initial order or of subsequent orders from said stored
value account.

5. The method of claim 4 further comprising the step of recording the input of
funds into said stored value account following the non-electronic receipt of funds
from said customer.

6. The method of claim 4 wherein:

said step of creating a provisional customer account comprises creating or
receiving a customer account identifier; and,

said customer account is activated upon said customer's attendance at
said specific merchant location for fulfillment of said initial order, and
without collecting further information from said customer upon said
attendance.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein:

said step of creating a provisional customer account comprises creating or
receiving a customer account identifier; and,

further comprising the step of collecting further information relating to said
customer.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein said further information comprises
payment account information.

9. The method of claim 7 wherein said further information is captured from at least one means of payment or payment credential tendered by said customer upon attendance at said specific merchant location for fulfillment of said initial order.

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10. The method of claim 9 wherein said means of payment or payment credential is an electronic payment credential selected from the group comprising: credit card, debit card, electronically stored credit account information, electronically stored debit account information.

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11. The method of claim 8, 9 or 10 further comprising the step of electronically receiving funds on behalf of said customer.

12. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:

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upon said customer's attendance at said specific merchant location for fulfillment of said initial order, obtaining from said customer a signature to a contract reflecting the terms of future transactions between said customer and said remote ordering system.

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13. The method of claim 12 wherein said signature is a digital signature or a manuscript signature.

14. The method of claim 12 wherein said step of activating comprises the steps of:

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receiving confirmation that said signature has been obtained from said customer;

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authorizing said activation of said customer account; and,

activating said customer account upon said authorization.

15. A method for establishing a customer account in an electronic remote ordering system wherein order fulfillment is accomplished upon the customer's attendance at a merchant location, comprising:

accepting an order from a customer at a point of sale terminal;

while said customer is still at the point of sale terminal, inviting said customer to establish a remote ordering customer account, said invitation including collecting identifying information from said customer; and,

upon said customer providing said identifying information, capturing details of said order from said point of sale terminal, combining said details with said identifying information, and identifying said order as an optional remote ordering customer preference for said customer.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein said identifying information comprises a telephone number.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein said identifying information consists exclusively of said telephone number.

18. The method of claim 15 or 17 further comprising the step of communicating said identifying information and said details to said electronic remote ordering system and establishing a customer account for said electronic remote ordering system based on said identifying information and said details.

19. A remote ordering system for use by at least one customer in placing an order for fulfillment at one of a plurality of affiliated merchants, said merchants operating a plurality of different merchant locations, comprising one or more

servers for receiving and processing an order from said customer, said order identifying a specific one of said merchant locations for fulfillment of said order, and for transmitting said order to said specific one of said merchant locations for fulfillment by said specific merchant location, and a database associated with said one or more servers, said database comprising information specific to each of said merchant locations.

20. A method for establishing a customer account in an electronic remote ordering system used in association with a chain of associated vendor outlets and wherein order fulfillment is accomplished upon the customer's attendance at a customer-specified merchant location, said remote ordering system comprising a database associating each outlet in said said with product fulfillment capabilities, said method comprising:

creating a customer account in said remote ordering system contemporaneous with said customer placing an initial order through said remote ordering system for fulfillment at a specific merchant location;

delivering said initial order from said remote ordering system to said specific merchant location; and,

activating said customer account upon or after said customer's attendance at said specific merchant location for fulfillment of said initial order.

21. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:

upon said customer's attendance at said specific merchant location for fulfillment of said initial order, verifying the customer's identity.

22. The method of claim 7 wherein said step of collecting further information comprises deriving said further information from a marketing database containing information identifying a plurality of potential customers.

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